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PETRARCH.

NEVER were the love affairs of Laura equalled either in interest or importance, by those of any other female, save Helen. The former exercised an important influence upon the character and happiness not only of the greatest man of his age, but one of the greatest the world ever knew. The latter gave rise to the Trojan war: and while Helen is rendered immortal by the Epic of Homer, the name of Laura shall live so long as language can be found in which to clothe the Lyrics of Petrarch. There seems to be a double reason for introducing an essay upon Petrarch, by an allusion to Laura, first because they are in reality names which can never be separated; and, secondly, because the subject of our essay is scarcely known except as a "tender and elegant poet, who loved with ardour and sung in all the harmony of verse the charm of his mistress." In fact it would not be far from correct to say, that he is generally considered only as a lover—in this passion is found the spark which lighted his poetic fire; this is the key which unlocks the most secret recesses of his soul; this the magic charm which solves every enigma of his character. Such being the popular opinion, we were not surprised to find that the authoress, (whose life of Petrarch we have just read,) should discover in love, the spring to all his actions, the hidden mystery which unravels every eccentricity of his nature. Now although the passion which Petrarch entertained for Laura, constitutes one of the most interesting traits in his character, and doubtless exercised an important influence on its formation, yet there are other natural feelings and passions, (particularly the love of fame,) as also some acci-

dental and external circumstances, the results of which are equally fraught with interest, and certainly entitled to no small degree of attention. We will even hazard incurring the censure and displeasure of sentimental lassies and love-sick swains, by expressing a doubt relative to the extreme intensity of this passion, and yet further by avowing the opinion that, however much Petrarch may have suffered from his unfortunate attachment, it would have required but a slight investigation to have convinced him that he was the voluntary victim.

In order to support the opinions advanced, it will be necessary to give a brief outline of some of the most important incidents connected with the life of Petrarch. He was born at Florence, in Italy, and appears to have been descended from noble ancestors. During his infancy, his parents, together with other illustrious personages, (among whom was Dante,) became the victims of faction, by which they were banished. His father removed to Avignon, a city of France, where the Roman See was then fixed. In a few years Petrarch was sent to a neighbouring town, that he might enjoy such advantages of education as circumstances and the age in which he lived afforded; and it is not difficult, even at this period of his life to discover in embryo, that thirst for knowledge which afterwards formed so prominent a trait in his character. He soon outstripped all his fellows, and the superiority of his genius was only equalled by the diligence with which it was cultivated. Thus prepared he entered at a very early age upon the study of the law; and his conduct at this period bears the decided impress of that particular character of mind, which was destined soon to render its possessor the most distinguished Poet, Philosopher, and Statesman of his time. His study of the law was a mere form, to use his own language, "I could not deprave my mind by such a system of chicanery as the present forms of law require." This truly was not the proper food for such a mind; it longed for something more noble, more lofty, more divine. He turned in disgust from the mere forms and technicalities of the law, to linger with rapture on the Poet's page: he loved to attend him in his noblest, loftiest flights, and delighted gaze upon the embodied visions of wild imagination: or turning to the eloquent strains of Cicero, he could either

find a charm in the sublime conceptions of his enthusiastic genius, or contemplate with pleasure those luminous displays of moral truth, every where discernable in his more profound and philosophic writings. About this time the death of his parents left him friendless, with the exception of a younger brother, with whom as his only companion, he hastened to Avignon, to settle the little property left by his father. We have said that the holy See had been removed to Avignon, which was consequently thronged by Cardinals, Bishops, and Princes; and Petrarch was induced by pecuniary embarrassment, curiosity, and the novelty of the affair, to join the crowd of flatterers who were ever in attendance upon the Palaces and Court. But it was not possible that one whom nature had cast both bodily and mentally in her finest mould, should remain unnoticed among the throng. Petrarch was in many respects pre-eminently qualified for a courtier: his external appearance was such as attracted universal attention and admiration; while his countenance was brightened by all those intellectual and moral qualities which dwelt within. Such a man could not long remain friendless: we soon find him united to one of the most noble, wealthy, and powerful families of the time; not as a flatterer and courtier, but by the more firm and sacred ties of friendship. Having contracted an intimacy with one of the young Colonnas, he was introduced by him into his family, one member of which was then Cardinal, and another among the leading men of Rome. In all of these he found friends, not of the moment, but for life.

It was about this time that Petrarch met with Laura; he saw her, he loved her, instantly, involuntarily—but while we admit and believe, that love is an involuntary passion, still we maintain our position, that Petrarch was the voluntary victim of that passion. But the torment which Petrarch's writings would lead us to believe he suffered, was not the result of that involuntary feeling excited by the sight of Laura, but of that feeling nourished and cultivated. On learning that Laura was a married woman, and could consequently never honourably return his love, he did not attempt to subdue his passion, but on the contrary courted her society; frequented every meeting and assembly at which she was likely to appear, and allowed no opportu-

nity of meeting her to pass unimproved. But it is not the object of this essay to censure Petrarch, and even if we were so inclined, we could not with justice in this connexion—his ardent temperament, youth, and consequent thoughtlessness, offering sufficient apology. He had not long cultivated this passion before his friend Colonna, who, notwithstanding his age, had been appointed Bishop of Lombes, invited Petrarch to accompany him, and it does not appear that at this time his attachment to Laura, was sufficient to counterbalance his friendship for the Bishop, and his love of travel; nor does it appear to have affected him seriously during his absence, since he informs us that he passed “a delicious summer—almost a celestial one.”

We have said that it was not our intention to censure Petrarch, but we must in support of one of the opinions advanced, remark, that the delightful summer passed at Lombes, afforded due time for reflection, whereas we find him returning to Avignon, and *voluntarily* reviving and cultivating a passion, which, being at first fascinating and unalloyed by pain, resembles the rose-bud, which though it may be handled with impunity, yet its tender thorns remind us that the full blown flower cannot be too cautiously touched. This appears to be the period at which we may date the beginning of Petrarch's unhappiness; for we really believe that he experienced some bitter moments as the result of his passion; it is not his distress, but the degree thereof, which we deny. Having on several occasions hinted an avowal of his feelings, he met with such severe repulses, as we should have deemed sufficient, not only to mortify, but so far wound his pride, as should prevent all subsequent approaches on his part; however, we shall have occasion to give a satisfactory explanation in his own words.

Petrarch's love of knowledge as evinced while yet a school-boy, has already been observed: in fact, it was a passion which increased with his age. It has also been remarked, that he became a courtier, for which he was pre-eminently qualified, both by external appearance and mental powers; but there was a something in his nature which soon presented a formidable opposition to all these advantages—an inherent love of liberty. To crouch and kneel before princes and nobles, was as abhorrent to his independent spirit, as were the political baseness and corruption

of crafty politicians, and the vices of the court, to the more noble and virtuous feelings of his heart; hence we find that although his passion was now at its height, he determines to tear himself from its object and wander alone over France and Germany. But is this wise resolution the result of mortification, or of reflection upon the folly and impropriety of his attachment? No: but the love of Laura, is overcome by a laudable curiosity, a thirst for knowledge, and a disgust of the manners of those among whom he lived.

During this absence we observe the first of that series of bitter lamentations which long after formed so prominent a feature in his writings; but we shall have occasion hereafter to observe the exaggeration which attends all these bursts of grief; and his tendency to deal in hyperboles whenever he touches upon this subject. In this connexion we would observe, that although, judging from his letters, Laura appeared ever present to him in his travels, as an evil and tormenting spirit; yet, upon the whole, he appears to have derived much pleasure from the novelties which surrounded him; and certainly his reason and reflection were not so far put to flight, as to prevent his making the most philosophical, minute and accurate observations upon all the varieties of manners, and customs, and beauties of nature and art. We next find him at Avignon, and since, during his absence, he appears ever longing to return, we will not in this instance insist upon our position of volition, but will grant that he was actuated by passion; at all events he returns, and we soon find him going through the same routine of distress, mortification and despair, sighs and tears, to whose pleasures he was now no stranger. Soon he resolves (according to our authoress) to give love a trip to Italy; yes, his determination to visit Rome is especially the result of that distracted state of mind which arose from passion: but we think a more natural cause may be found in that thirst for knowledge which even love could not subdue—in a desire to stand upon that "holy haunted ground" which Cicero and Virgil had consecrated by their presence, but especially in that love for his native land which formed another important trait in his character. At any rate he was very successful in his flight, for Cupid, who had pursued him through

Germany and France, became fatigued or frightened on his way to Italy; and Petrarch tells us that "instead of spending whole nights in tears, he slept quietly, everything amused him, he was gay, thought he was cured and smiled at the follies of his love." Petrarch having thus, by his stay at Rome, and travels through Italy, been enabled to "smile at the follies of his love," again returns and *voluntarily* renews his passion. Now is it possible that an individual, who had suffered so much as Petrarch's writings would seem to indicate, should pursue and provoke a serpent, the poison of whose fang had but just been extracted.

It was during this stay at Avignon that his grief appears to have reached its summit; and to quote from our authoress, "in this dreadful state Petrarch saw he had no other resource but flight." Love again appears to the first great cause, though "it is probable that desire of fame in the pursuit of letters" may have had some effect in inducing him to leave Avignon and retire to Vacluse. There appears to us something singular in the idea of one's retiring to so beautiful and romantic a spot as Vacluse, for the purpose of subduing such a passion as love. Petrarch tells us that there "were shady woods, cool grottos, green lawns, enamelled pastures" and all that is calculated to charm the eye and fill the soul with love. The only compensation for Laura, was a "swarthy old woman, dry and parched as the Libyan deserts;" and the only companion who warded off the darts of Cupid, during those hours of weariness and gloom, which succeed the fatigues of study, an old fisherman. It was indeed love, but love of letters, of fame, of glory, which drove him to Vacluse; these were ever rival passions to that for Laura. It was in the humble cottage of Vacluse that glory's flame found a safe retreat from the vices and corruption by which it had been smothered. Here it found nothing to dim its brightness, but, uniting with the fire of love, blazed forth with increased brilliancy and purity.

Many other circumstances might be adduced in proof of the positions assumed, but we have already dwelt much too long upon this portion of our subject, and hope that sufficient has been said to prove that there were other feelings and passions of his nature, than that of love, which were equally

strong as incentives to action; and also that he was the voluntary victim of his own passion. Enough too has perhaps been said respecting the degree of his attachment; and we will only add a word relative to that species of exaggeration at which we have already hinted. Premising that nothing can be known of Petrarch's love for Laura, except from his own writings, we will mention a single instance which will suffice to give us an idea of the exaggerated style in which he is wont to express himself upon this subject. Speaking of the torments of love while at Vaucluse, he says, in one of his letters, "Thrice in that dark and lonely hour, when nought but ghostly shades are seen or heard, Laura with stedfast look approached my bed, and claimed her slave. My limbs were frozen with fear, my blood fled from my veins and rushed upon my heart. Trembling, I rose ere morn and left a house where all alarmed me. I climbed the rocks, I ran into the woods, watching with fearful eyes this dreadful vision." Now is there not something ludicrous in the idea of such a man as Petrarch leaping from his bed at dead of night, and without even making his toilette, running over rocks and mountains, through woods and creeks, endeavouring to elude the pursuit of the vision of his mistress. The same holds good relative to his expressions of friendship. Never did man possess more numerous, or warmer friends, and never were friendships more sincerely returned. Repeatedly was he called upon to mourn their loss, and deeply did he lament, but in giving vent to his grief he invariably uses the same strong language. At the death of each, he tells us that with this friend are buried all his prospects of future joy; he charges fate with cruelty for having left him to linger out a life of wretchedness. Now although this is perfectly natural, yet we must make allowance for it in estimating his feelings.

It would perhaps be proper in this connexion, to throw in a word relative to Laura; but the present length of our article demands that it should give place to something more important: however, we will redeem the promise made in a preceding page, to explain why Petrarch continued his attentions notwithstanding such continued repulses; this will be better conveyed in his own words: "Those rigours mixed with softness, those tender angers, and those

delicious reconciliations which were written in your eyes, have forever kept my mind in doubt and uncertainty."

Having considered Petrarch as a lover, we come now to view him in a no less interesting light, viz., as a man of letters: not only as a poet, but as the philosopher and statesman, who having excited the wonder and admiration of his own age, made such advances in moral science, and penetrated so deeply into the mysteries of government, as would have entitled him to distinction in more modern times, and shall not fail to elicit the applause of posterity. At first it appears surprising that Petrarch, born in the bosom of discord, and reared amid the sound of arms; living in a land torn by factions, and continually agitated by the quarrels of Popes and Emperors; at a period when nought but ignorance, luxury and dissipation reigned, should have effected so great a moral and intellectual revolution, as amazed his own countrymen, and elicited the admiration of all succeeding ages. But a little reflection serves to unravel the mystery. Petrarch was gifted by nature, not only with the noblest feelings of the heart, but with the highest order of genius; and this is something which, though modified, can never be subdued by circumstances. Though it would doubtless have flourished and grown more rapidly in the cool, refreshing shades of peace; yet we find it springing up and rearing its proud head far above the rude blasts of war and confusion. Tranquillity, court favour, and all other advantageous circumstances, may indeed be requisite for those who feed a vitiated taste upon literary trifles; but the rapt poet, and soul-inspiring orator write and speak for deathless fame. Hence it is, that Milton, nearer our own times, wrote the *Paradise Lost* when blind, destitute, stripped of his office, and deprived of court favour. Hence it is that Dante, who immediately preceded Petrarch, composed the *Divina Comedia*, when banished and proscribed; misfortune served but to rouse the powers of his genius and point the shafts of his satire: and hence it is that Petrarch, born amidst ignorance, and war, retired to *Vaucluse*. Nature had formed him a poet, and he loved to dwell in the poet's land; he delighted to reflect upon the moral and philosophical precepts which Cicero had framed, and again to be enraptured by his eloquence. Hence, though printing presses had not then swarmed the land

with books ; he overcame every difficulty in rescuing valuable manuscripts from the mouldering nooks and corners of the cloister : having obtained these, and never wearied by the search, he copied and re-copied, till his own mind becoming influenced by the same sacred fires, he hastened to breathe the same soft air, and look upon the same sunny skies which gave refinement to the poetry, and elegance to the oratory of Rome. Love, too, imparted a degree of refinement and purity to his poetry before unknown. He loved to study the manners and morals, the virtues and vices of the ancients ; then, wandering about, to contrast with them those of his own time. He learned to live by studying the lives of the great men who preceded him. By reflecting upon the laws of Solon and Lycurgus he was enabled to point out the weaknesses and follies of existing governments. Such are some of the causes which enabled Petrarch to reach the summit of Parnassus—which enabled him alone to clamber by an untrodden path so far up the hill of moral science, as to pause, look back, compassionate and point out to the miserable, depressed, unhappy crowd below, the steps he took : and such are some of the causes which enabled him to stand forth, the oracle whose responses to all questions respecting government were so eagerly sought.

We have already had occasion to mention the natural exaggeration which may be found in those "immortal lyrics," which he composed at Vaucluse. His treatises on government and philosophy we have not read ; but our opinions respecting him, in these particulars, have been formed not only by considering the different acts of his life, not from his having been engaged in the most important embassies ; not from his having been importuned by Popes, Emperors and Princes, to accept of the highest offices of power and of trust within their gift ; not from his having been consulted in the correction and remodeling of the Roman government ; but from his letters, those models of epistolatory composition, which have never been surpassed, nor, circumstances considered, even equalled ; which although they have received the universal applause and unequalled approbation of modern times, can never be too highly, or scarcely adequately praised. It is these which sustain us in our opinions of Petrarch as a philosopher

and statesman. We are not conscious of ever having read the private letters of any individual with more real pleasure. Always suited to the subject and person addressed, sometimes humorous, at others grave and satirical; sometimes filled with moral and philosophical precepts; sometimes argumentative, at others laying bare the most secret recesses of his heart; always learned, without being pedantic; and displaying in the most easy and natural manner, the most thorough knowledge of ancient men and ancient times; and uniformly simple, concise and elegant.

Here we are reluctantly compelled to leave Petrarch, though it would be deeply interesting to consider him in the light of a friend; to examine the effects of that innate love of liberty which formed so interesting a trait of his character, and to imagine such a man enjoying the blessings of the domestic circle. But far more interesting to examine the causes of that strange phenomenon, that sudden literary revolution which occurred during his life, when "the lawyers and physicians no longer consulted Justinian and Esculapius, but deaf to the cries of the sick, and their clients, they listened to none but Virgil and Homer: when even labourers, and carpenters, and masons abandoned their hammers and shovels to run after Apollo and the Muses." All this, we say, would to us, at least, prove interesting; but already we feel ashamed of the immoderate, yet necessary, length of our article, and will not dare write another word.

B. C.

ALISON'S HISTORY OF EUROPE.

MR. ALISON'S history is certainly a great work—a magnificent work. It comes too from the right quarter, and at the right time to fill an important blank in the chain of standard histories. We have had books enough already about the great era of Napoleon, of a certain sort. We have had Memoirs, and Diaries, and Reminiscences, Journals of Subalterns, and leaves from the note books of literary Hussars. The Duchess D'Abrantes has given us a book full of romance; Bourrienne and O'Meara have given

us books full of gossip, and *perhaps* too of lies; Count de Segur has given us a book full of horrors; and last of all, brave old Sir Walter, tearing himself from the bedside of a dying wife, and shutting himself up in his "cell," sat down with his eyes full of tears, and his stout heart ready to break, to a task, the subordinate purpose of which was to give us the achievements of Napoleon. The real object was to discharge the enormous debt he had so manfully assumed. A work written under such circumstances could not but be deficient in the essentials of a perfect history, care, coolness and research; the great wonder is, that the work is what it is.

Mr. Alison has set about the task in the right manner. He has read and carefully collated all the prominent writers of England and the Continent, and given us abundant references to chapter and verse. Not content with this, he has visited the scenes of the principal engagements, and is thus enabled to sketch a march or a battle with the minuteness and accuracy of a daguerreotype. Never have we met with a historian who excelled him in graphic narratives of battles, and certainly none that equals him in the picturesque descriptions of pageantries, triumphal marches, reviews and coronations. Like every other human production this splendid history has its faults.

The principal one in the eyes of an American, or a liberal foreigner, is the rabid aversion which the author feels for everything that savours of *democracy*. It amounts to a monomania. The very sight of the word seems to act upon him like the sight of a red flag upon the mad bull in a Spanish amphitheatre. No sooner does he see it than he becomes furious—raves, tears, foams at the mouth, and plunges at his imaginary foe with all the impotence of blind ferocity. To defend this silly phantasm, he occasionally makes use of an argument, which is generally more silly than the delusion itself. We have not time or space at present to refute these arguments, and we trust that to an American reader it would be a needless task.

Impartiality, everybody will confess, is the prime essential in a good history. Now we have the charity to suppose that Mr. Alison fully intended to write a perfectly impartial work, and no doubt sincerely believes he has done so. In the main, he has succeeded in his undertaking, but

now and then, in spite of himself, the mask slips aside, and reveals a most hideous expression of British Toryism behind. His fulsome eulogy of Pitt, and his sinking fund, his venomous tirades against parliamentary reform, and against American republicanism, are conceived in a spirit and style known only to those who have ever punished themselves by reading the political articles in Blackwood's Magazine. We expected a considerable partiality toward his own country, and this he has shown, although he shows it in a very peculiar manner. He does not traduce and revile all rival nations. Such meanness he leaves to the heroic whippers who figure in the pages of the United Service Journal. He freely accords to other nations their full measure of glory, but loves to accompany the tribute with a delicate insinuation that great as they are, old England is greatly their superior. He depicts in glowing colours the terrible energy of the early Revolutionary armies of France, and laments in the same breath that his government did not send over 50,000 men to quench that fearful energy. The heroes of the Pyramids behaved admirably when they swept off the Mameluke cavalry, but they never behaved better than when they were swept off in turn by Sir Ralph Abercrombie. Washington he holds up before us as an immaculate patriot, but he cannot let him pass without remarking "it is the highest glory of *England* to have given birth, even amid transatlantic wilds to such a man." Bonaparte, he could not but admit, was a most consummate general, but all his generalship availed him nothing, when he had to contend with Mr. Alison's own countrymen at Waterloo. In fact the remembrance of this last catastrophe seems to be ever present to the mind of the historian. It haunts him like a ghost. It follows him through all the progress of Napoleon's triumphs—in the smoke of Marengo, Jena and Austerlitz we discern the dim outlines of his attendant spectre—amid every merry peal of victory, our ears are stunned with the foreboding knell of *Waterloo*.

Another fault of our author is his wearisome habit of repeating the same, or nearly the same expression until we are nauseated. Every one who has read the work, must have noticed how often he tells us that—the masses are not fit to be trusted with power—that but for the cow-

ardly desertion of the nobility, the French monarchy might have been saved—that Prussia paid dearly for her lukewarmness by the rout of Jena, and the partition of Tilsit, &c. &c.

There are many other minor faults which we might mention, such as the occasional length, and obscurity of his sentences—his ignorance of every thing pertaining to our own country—and the rather shabby morality displayed in his estimate of Lord Nelson, which we were pained to see from a man of high religious character like Mr. Alison; but we feel it is an invidious task to decry a work, over which we have passed so many delightful hours. To us, Mr. Alison has been like the affable *Interpreter* of the allegory; showing us things “rare and profitable,” and leading us from one scene of absorbing interest, to another.

We started with him on that memorable day when the States General assembled at Versailles, to heal the national disorders—when a lean, haggard, ill-favoured young man rose up, and spake words of thunder to that excited assembly—words which he lived to write in their own blood. We have followed with him that ill-favoured young man through all the career of revolution and anarchy, from the time when he set off amid the shouts of the populace, with the splendid Mirabeau, the politic Vergniaud, and the ambitious Danton by his side, and even royalty itself joining in the delusive train. We have gone with that boasting, rejoicing train to the “Place of Revolution.” Attended by our faithful guide, we have stood from day to day on that field of blood, and beheld the chariots of death approaching, laden with the rich and the proud, the young and the beautiful; we have seen them ascend the fatal scaffold; among them we have discerned the placid features of Vergniaud, and the glaring eyeballs of Danton; we have listened to the memorable last words of the gifted Roland; we have seen the intrepid Charlotte Corday die with the rose between her lips; we have even beheld the rude hand of an executioner grasping the throat of the daughter of the Cæsars! Our patient friend has stood by us until the drama is concluded—until the Revolution, like Saturn, has devoured all its children, and at last we have beheld the haggard, ill-favoured Robespierre himself dragged upon the scaffold, ghastly with wounds, and quivering with ter-

ror. The bandage is torn from his bloody face ; his broken jaw falls upon his breast ; the executioner seizes his trembling frame, and forces it down upon the block, but cannot force down that frightful yell which rises above the creak of the guillotine and the demoniac shout of the populace. *It is the same populace that once shouted at Versailles.*

While these horrid scenes are being enacted, we are one day led into the garden of the Tuilleries, where a half naked mob are surrounding the palace ; some have even gained an entrance, and are making its venerable walls resound with their Jacobin songs. Near us, leaning carelessly on the railings, is a handsome young cadet, whose bright eye is watching this novel scene. The door opens, and the King appears on the balcony amid the jeers and scoffs of the rabble below. One of the mob, more dastardly than the rest, seizes a red "cap of liberty," and places it upon the brow of his sovereign. The eye of the young soldier flashes fire ; he can no longer repress his indignation. "Why have they let all that rabble in?" he exclaims, "Why don't they sweep off four or five hundred of them with the cannon ; the rest would be off fast enough." He turns away in a violent rage, seizes the arm of his friend Bourrienne and is soon lost in the mazes of the crowd.

To those who would know more of this wonderful young man, who would follow him through his career of glory, and of crime, up to the most dazzling point that mortal ever gained, we can commend no better guide than Mr. Alison.

T. L. C.

AMERICAN CITIZENSHIP.

Without entering into any declamation about the greatness of our country, and the perfection of its institutions, we may with truth and propriety say, that we stand in these respects, among the first of nations. And it is desirable that every American should have a full and adequate idea of our national importance, not to foster an absurd national vanity ; but in order rightly to appreciate the great privi-

leges and vast responsibilities of American citizenship. This is a subject much more talked of than thought of, especially in regard to the *duties* involved. We have received from men, who spared no expense of treasure, wisdom, or life, to obtain it, a boon, worth all its price, on the preservation of which depends not only our own prosperity, but the welfare of our children, and our children's children. Vast then is our responsibility—our individual responsibility. The nation is made up of individuals. Every citizen, in his every act as citizen, does that which tends either to the preservation or destruction of this invaluable legacy. Then under what obligation is he, to himself, to posterity, to the cause of human liberty—first to assure himself of what is duty, and then unflinchingly to perform it.

This is especially necessary, inasmuch as our system of government, though free from some of the dangers of other governments, has dangers peculiarly its own. One of the most threatening of these arises from the fact, that in order to its successful administration, honest and wise rulers are especially necessary, while we are especially liable to have rulers who are any thing but wise and honest. This last fact, experience teaches; yet it does not seem a necessary consequence of our system, if, indeed, our people are competent to the right exercise of their privileges. In truth, this evil of dishonest and incompetent public servants, in its present alarming aspect, is the growth of recent years. In our earlier days it was otherwise. Then, even amid the greatest strife of party, the men elected were generally men of known principles, of tried integrity, and of undoubted talent. As a consequence, our legislative assemblies were objects of just pride; they acted with the dignity becoming the chosen representatives of a nation's wisdom—with a seriousness suited to the discussion of a nation's welfare—with a wisdom which proved them worthy objects of a nation's choice. But of late years, "we have changed all that!" Things have gradually waxed from bad to worse, and now, alas! our halls of legislature but too often present scenes which may well call up a blush. Their *dignity* oftentimes would not constitute propriety in a nursery; as often it would disgrace the manners of a pugilistic ring. An affectation of wittiness, and a fondness for boyish fun,

has driven *seriousness* into almost perpetual banishment. And while the displays of their *wisdom* have often been ludicrous, the sad evidence of its effects has repressed the rising smile. Who regards our Congress with that profound deference and respect, which it is all important it should receive, and which true worth would not fail to command? Who in our day regards Congress as in Washington's, or in Jefferson's day men regarded Congress? Who *can* so regard it? Dress a fool as a philosopher and put him in a philosopher's chair, and will he therefore be less a fool? I trow not. A few men of the olden time and of the genuine stamp, do still grace our legislative halls, and well is it for us, they do. Modern upstarts are compelled sometimes, at least, to receive the rebukes of honest indignation, and to dwindle into their actual nothingness, before the commanding dignity of true wisdom and true worth. But how small a proportion of the whole do such men form. To what a deplorable extent is it true that our elections "cast up the scum of society, as the representation upon which is devolved all legislative power." The consequences to our nation have been such, as from such rulers and from the state of things that could elect such, were to have been expected.

We have dwelt on this single example without adducing others, both because it is amply sufficient for our purpose, and because it is not only itself an evil, but is the cause of many others, and an aggravation of all. No one needs be told that during these last fifteen years, our condition in point of prosperity and of happiness, has been getting worse; that our affairs have been less advantageously conducted; our government less successfully administered. *Party* has more than ever usurped the place of country, and threatens every effort to correct disorder and to restore prosperity.

Whence then are these things?

As already remarked, they are no necessary consequence of our system, *provided*, our citizens are competent to the right exercise of their privileges. Must we say then, that our citizens are incompetent to this exercise? Must we own ourselves another example of man's inability to self-government? We answer, No! but that these evils are the result of a principle which has no necessary connexion with our

system—which was at first adopted as an expedient—which as such was unnecessary, (as we shall show,) and which when it comes to be fully understood by the people, cannot fail to be abandoned. That principle is, the indiscriminate bestowment of the rights of citizenship on immigrant foreigners.

Since there will be great differences of opinion on many points, among the best and wisest of men, it is not surprising that our citizens should be honestly divided on many matters of national policy. But were only such as are honest, sincere, and lovers of their country called to decide on these matters, we should have nothing to fear for the ultimate result. But it is obvious that if we bring in a crowd of voters, foreigners alike to our institutions, our principles, and our country, they alter the whole face of affairs. Themselves devoid of power to move one way or the other; they become the passive tools of men who will not scruple to use them. Behold then the source of evil!

Yet it is a fact, and it would seem one of the most surprising features of the case, that a mere proposal to repeal our naturalization laws would be sufficient to brand its author with unpopularity! Let a few who are convinced of the evil of these laws, unite in an organized effort toward their abolishment; instantly every *patriot* is aroused; the stump thunders its vile reproaches on the "miscreants;" the papers, (according to their respectability,) denounce them either in high rhetorical invective, or in language borrowed from "the gate of Billing,"—and scarce a voice rises in their defence. And why this? It is but one of the evils resulting from the very principle we are now denouncing. The doctrine of non-naturalization is, as might well be expected, ungrateful to the mass of naturalized foreigners. But these naturalized foreigners in many places already hold the balance of power, and the party that does not espouse their cause exposes itself to certain defeat. Hence party leaders and party papers of every name, have rung the changes on our "extending the right hand of fellowship to every down-trodden son of liberty;" "affording an asylum to the distressed and oppressed of every land," &c. &c. And assuredly to dissent from what both parties so earnestly agree upon, must be political heresy of the deepest dye!

But surely if once our native citizens, and such adopted

citizens as really feel our country to be *their* country; can see this subject in its true light, they must at that instant see their duty in regard to it.

Before endeavouring to prove that this system of naturalization must necessarily do harm, let us stay a moment and inquire of its friends *what good* it does. No insignificant inquiry. For reason and common sense both teach us that useless laws had better not exist. The only benefit proposed to our country by these laws, as far as we can discover, was to increase its population and wealth by inducing emigration to it. This is that for which they were the expedient, and this is all the advantage we have ever heard attributed to them. Now we say that for this purpose they were totally unnecessary, and have been altogether inefficient. The number of immigrants would have been as great, certainly within a very small fraction as great, without these laws as with. And as proof of this, the professed object of immigrants here is not to become citizens, but to obtain such a living as they could not obtain at home. Nor is citizenship even *one* of their objects, for the immense majority of them know not the existence of such a privilege, until informed by the importunity of needy, vote-hunting politicians. Of this fact no one can doubt, who has lived in one of the Atlantic cities, the immediate receptacles of these immigrating hordes. Of such as have come to our country *solely* for the sake of enjoying its political privileges, the number is so small that scarce one man in a hundred can name one such among all the men he has ever known. As an expedient then the thing has failed, the good it proposed being accomplished by independent means. Wherefore then the laws? Wherefore, above all, the hue and cry against every effort to repeal them!

That we have a *right* to repeal our naturalization laws, no less than to enact them, none will dispute: that we should do no injustice to such foreigners as may afterwards come among us, by exercising this right, few will doubt: that if these laws do no good it were better to exercise this right, most will admit; that if they do positive harm, we are in duty bound to exercise this right, none can deny. By what has already been shown then, these laws stand condemned. But there yet remains alas! too much evidence of the great point we propose to prove, that they are altogether pernicious.

There are two grounds on which we assert that the indiscriminate bestowment of the rights of citizenship on immigrant foreigners cannot but be pernicious to our institutions and destructive of our welfare. The first is, that an immense majority of these foreigners are totally incompetent to an intelligent exercise of these rights. The second, that a vast proportion of them are subject to an influence which leads them to a hostile exercise of them.

1. The vast majority of our immigrants are incapable of an intelligent exercise of the rights of citizenship.

No advocate of republicanism would pretend to assert that men totally devoid of education, or men who have from infancy crouched beneath despotic power and worshipped the heel that trod upon them; or men who "appear to be utterly insensible that public order is a good, that obedience to law is a virtue as well as a benefit, or that human blood is more precious than that of unclean beasts,"—that such men, while they continue such, are capable of sharing in the high and responsible duties of self-government. Yet all who have been in contact with the people we are speaking of, know that of the great majority, when first they arrive here, all this, and more is true. And how long a period is allowed them that they may fit themselves for these duties? At the most five years! Why, supposing each man to make the subject one of especial study, during the whole five years, even then, starting so completely *de novo*, he could have accomplished his task but very imperfectly; but when, as is the fact, scarce one man has had one thought on the subject throughout these five years, the only probable improvement will be that he can go to the polls with a better shirt on his back, that he could have done at first. Does any man in our country suppose that all our slaves, at once enfranchized, would be capable of judging and deciding on our questions of policy, even the most simple? Yet the mass of our slaves have had better opportunities for learning something of these things, than the mass of our immigrants. And these are the men that we admit to an equal voice with ourselves in deciding questions of the most critical interest to the country! The fact is that people generally who have seen anything at all of these persons, *never do* imagine that they are capable of understanding our system, or appreciating its principles. Who

supposes, as a procession of these newly manufactured citizens passes through the streets of our cities, shouting in scarce intelligible English, the watchword of their party—who supposes that such a crowd has any rationally formed opinion upon the questions, on which they are about to render null the votes of as many intelligent citizens of the opposite party? No one! absolutely no one! Every body knows that to them '*election*' means no more than a time of much bustle, when they become of a sudden in great demand; marching and counter-marching through the streets, bearing candles and transparencies, to the sound of drum and fife,—when they meet in great crowds, where certain men talk, and *they*, at intervals, shout; when they get plenty to eat, and, to wind up all, if they choose, most gloriously drunk. And amidst all this, they have almost forgotten that they once put a little piece of paper, that was *given* them, into a box! What wonder, when by our divisions, the balance of power is thrown into the hands of such men, that our country, in its politics, is swayed hither and thither, reeling like a drunken man? And can people know these things and not *seek* a repeal of the laws that are the cause of them? Alas! a want of thought is a characteristic as well of masses as of individuals.

It may be said, that carrying out the same principles, many native Americans ought to be proscribed. We admit it. There are many Americans unworthy the name, and could we beforehand distinguish these we ought to prevent their exercising the rights of Americans. But this we cannot do. Therefore we must let the tares grow with the wheat. But of this class the number is comparatively very small. Few men can live for one and twenty years in this land, without breathing in those great principles of liberty which pervade as it were our very atmosphere; without picking up what seem to them sufficient reasons for their choice of a party, and without being able too to state those reasons. That the general opinion in regard to the superior intelligence and sagacity of native Americans, is not unfounded, is particularly evident from a comparison of the character of the great mass of the citizens of the Eastern States, with the great mass of those in the Middle States. To run the comparison were unnecessary.

On the other hand, among the foreigners who come

among us, are some of real intelligence and worth. Far be it from us to depreciate such. But these are a small proportion of the whole; and although some suppose that we should rather suffer ninety and nine guilty men to escape, than hang one who is innocent; no one can imagine that we should put arms into the hands of ninety and nine enemies, rather than let one who might be a good ally remain without them.

The discussion of our second point we must reserve for a future number. N. A.

TO ———.

Fair Italy may boast of girls
Soft as the skies above them,
And melting eyes, and waving curls,
But I could never love them;
The Scottish maids are wild and free,
As deer upon the highland,
But Scotland cannot match the e'e,
The blue e'e of Long Island.

Circassian lips are buds of bliss
Nor is the fruit forbidden;
Ten thousand blossoms, made to kiss,
In Turkish dens are hidden:
There's magic in the thrilling clasp
Of maids in Gallia's free land,
But earth has no such witchery, as
The red lip of Long Island.

There's sweetness in a sweet caros,
And Georgian lips are willing,
Fair roses bloom in sunny Greece,
The coldest heart beguiling.
Rich blushes, mantling southern cheeks,
Reach hearts through proof of Milan;
But southern sunset cannot vie
The soft cheek of Long Island.

Rich music floats on Spanish air,
The voices of Spain's daughters;
Rich tones entrance the gondolier
Across Venetian waters;
Wild is the Houri's melody,
Turk! in the dreams of thy land,
But Houri ne'er heard music like
The soft tone of Long Island.

The northern girls are glorious girls,
There's spirit in their glances ;
The southern girls are gentle girls,
Beware the dark eye's lances.
Light as the fawn's, the bounding step,
On heather and on highland,
But earth has not a fairer than
Fair Mary of Long Island.

ESTEL.

THE SALEM DELUSION.

THE inherent existence of superstition in the human mind is a proposition too obvious to be discredited. And, though, comparatively harmless in its most simple nature, when blended with religion, it leads to most disastrous effects. Ruthlessly trampling upon the nobler feelings of man, it enervates his system, and sinks him, finally, to the lowest depths of degradation and despair. Hence, we cannot fail to commiserate the sad fate of those, who are so infatuated as to crouch to the fearful burden imposed by this inharmonious union.

Such, and so revolting to humanity were the woeful productions of this grand cause a century and a half ago in the beautiful village of Salem. A settled animosity had existed between the minister and a part of the people of his charge, and each strove to do his brother the wrong. The former after long racking his ingenuity had eventually discovered a method by which to obtain his desired end. The Puritans servilely misinterpreting the Jewish customs and laws, and excited by its mysterious novelty, had concluded a belief in witchcraft. This error had been diffused throughout the borders of Massachusetts, and had even been promulgated by the powerful influence of Baxter and others in the mother country. Already had its dire effects been witnessed in America by the execution of one convicted by the weakest testimony. Through the evidence of children, relatives to himself, the minister Parris first made prevalent a persuasion in witchcraft among his own church, and poured upon the unprotected head of a

friendless and forlorn native the vials of his inveterate wrath. Such was the little fire which kindled so great a matter. Parris stood not alone among his own class, nor was the post of influence and honor exempt from this belief. Two powerful coadjutors were soon found,—the vain and bigoted Cotton Mather and the ignorant and despotic Stoughton. The one stood high in the church, and his pious precepts were revered by all. Naturally, however, of a proud and self-willed disposition, his advancement through his own learning, and the influence of his indulgent parent, only developed his meaner passions and emotions. His nobler traits were too greedily swallowed up by his rapacious vanity and his absorbing love of power. The other was his creature;—cold and uncompassionate, he hated mankind, and desired, in the high position which he unlawfully sustained, the greatest emoluments, indifferent to the claims of justice or truth. These, with others of the same stamp, placed themselves side by side, while their governor the honest though weak-minded Phipps, was forced, to behold their deeds with silent indifference. A destructive war was waged against the best interests of the people, who were slavishly led under their despotic sway, within the boundaries of this devoted place. Parris brought to trial such as were too holy to be associated under his ministry, and accused them of the heinous crime of witchcraft. Mather, proclaiming witchcraft “a nefarious high treason against the Majesty on high, and a capital crime,” prosecuted the charge; and Stoughton willingly condemned the unoffending victim of their malevolence. Courts, once open for the administration of justice, were now transformed into judgment-halls for the proclamation of their base and unrighteous decisions;—and though Bradstreet, the choice of the people, had deemed the evidence too weak for conviction, his influence was little valued. The most unnatural and whimsical signs were adduced as tokens of witchcraft; and the scaffold was soon employed for the execution of those who were so fearless as to deny its existence; while such as confessed a belief, forced though it might be, escaped unscathed. Parents fell by the testimony of their own children, and “the brother delivered up the brother to death.” Accusations were constantly increasing; and private pique or open animosity brought death upon many. It is a singular

fact in this history of fanatical superstition and error, that the virtuous, the venerable and the innocent seemed the principal subjects of attack.

From this incongruous mixture of truth and error, the suffocating fumes of sectarianism would also arise, and ever and anon envelop those who still adhered to what *they* considered scriptural. For this very cause, already had the unflinching Quaker been condemned to death, and the devout Baptist forced to fly from the *cruel* tender mercies of his bigoted persecutors; for this were the humble Roger Williams and the pure and generous Sir Henry Vane exiled from their adopted though ungrateful land. And, now again with redoubled fury, burst the storm of rage and malice, so long lain dormant, upon such as promulgated the liberty of conscience. Witchcraft was imputed to the worthy and high-minded Baptists, one of whom was barbarously condemned to the press.

Nor did their blind enthusiasm urge them merely against the common people, but they entered the sacred portals of the church and dragged to their prison-house its ministering guide. Already had their dread anathemas been issued, and soon the gentle, the tolerant, and the unbiassed Barroughs was brought before their fatal tribunal. Was he guilty of witchcraft? Never dare any open his lips with so vile a charge. Oh no. He fearlessly denied its existence. He showed his people its absurdity from the same inspired volume which he pressed upon them to study for their everlasting happiness. But the infatuated and vain Mather and the envious Parris had a stronger hold upon the affections of the deluded people, nor could his spotless character, or high and responsible station deliver him from their fatal grasp. He too was arraigned, condemned, and ended his life like the veriest criminal. This was their most successful attack. Their frenzied bigotry was in its prime. Truth seemed rooted from the minds of all, and independence had apparently forever fled. Justice uttered the wild shriek of despair as he flapped his wings over those unholy courts. The boundless vanity of Mather and the inhuman tyranny of Stoughton seemed if possible to increase. Their passions outrunning their understandings easily led them to the most atrocious enormities. But truth must in all cases ultimately prevail. Man will arise, and shake off at some

time the enchanting robe of error which may cover him, and awake to his pristine vigour. Enlightened, he cannot rest forever in the bogs of superstition, but will strive and eventually succeed in gaining a sure foothold on the safe embankment. Preëminently was this the case in Salem. A violent opposer of Mather soon appeared, in the person of the philanthropic and sensible though unrefined Calif. In the contest Mather was outdone, and the people soon lost that confidence in him once so liberally bestowed. Witchcraft was exploded: the snares and gins which had been concealed from the eye were exhibited and destroyed, and the highway was made clear. The glad jubilee rung throughout the land that the freeman's life was no longer in danger.

— "Error wounded *writhed* in pain,
And *died* amid its worshippers."

The funeral dirge was gladly sung to the memory of that fatal delusion, and the people with feelings of joyous heartfelt praise, hailed the reinstallation of truth.

ORAC.

THE BATTLE OF WATERLOO.

A BALLAD.

I.

The morn was dark and lowering
That ushered in the fight;
The damp, chill shades reluctantly
Gave way before the light.
A cloud spread o'er the earth,
Its robe of gloomy gray,
As if to weave the winding sheet
Of those to die that day.

II.

On two opposing hills,
The hostile camps are spread;
And groves of larch and aspen,
Are waving overhead:
But mid the pendent foliage,
Are mingled plume and lance;
And that green steep is trampled deep
By fiery coursers' prance.

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III.

But list; the clang of trumpets,
Breaks on the slumbering morn;
And far the long drawn echoes,
O'er the dewy meads are borne.
The war-steeds paw the ground,
And toss their flowing mane;
Brave soldiers greet the comrades now,
They ne'er shall greet again.

IV.

The far-extended squadrons,
Ride forth in long array,
And wait the signal eagerly,
That hurls them in the fray.
High, the threefold banners,
Of viny France are seen;
While thick below, the bristling steel,
Reflects a silvery sheen.

V.

The gay chasseur of Valence,
Is girding on his mail,
And burnishing the brave old sword,
Whose keen edge cuts so well :
The soldiers of Marengo,
Are gathered in the night ;
The heroes brave of Lodi,
Are mustered for the fight :

VI.

The conquerors of Jena,
The gallant, tried, and true ;
Those old in wars and scam'd with scars
Are here on Waterloo ;
And those that 'scaped the slaughter,
On Berezina's shore,
When down the ruddy torrent foam'd,
Swoll'n high with Gallie gore.

VII.

The noble chief of France,
Who guides the glittering mass,
With folded arms and anxious brow,
Surveys the crowded pass :
His eye, with restless glance,
Darts quick along the line,
And passes o'er the valley
Where Albion's banners shine.

VIII.

There, on the grassy mount,
O'er which yon vulture screams,
Waves England's red-cross standard
In morning's rosy gleams.
The ardent sons of Erin,
Have soiled the azure seas ;
And Scotia's plume and banner
Are floating on the breeze.
The sunbeams shine forth gaily,
On pennon's waving fold ;
And in his rays those heroes
Are bright with steel and gold.

IX.

But now the signal's sounded,
From trumpet and drum of France ;
And on their foe, right furiously,
Those gallant troops advance.
Their tramping shakes the valley,
Their high shout rends the skies ;
The din of roaring culverin,
With booming echo flies,
Down, down the steep they hurry
With sabre, lance, and targe ;

And like a mountain avalanche,
On sweeps the bloody charge.

X.

O'er both those flashing hill-tops,
Hangs a dark and sulphurous pall,
And hissing shot and shells,
In bursting torrents fall.
Like chaff before the blast,
Whole ranks are borne away :
And plume, and lance, and pennon,
Go down amid the fray.

XI.

And as, when raging Boreas,
Comes hasting with loud roar,
The billow rushes furiously,
Against the foaming shore ;
So on, that wave of slaughter,
Pours high its madden'd flood.
And fierce and fast, the torrent dash'd
Its foaming crest of blood.

XII.

And as the surge of ocean
Against the coral rock,
Is shivered into fragments,
Beneath the stunning shock—
So now that wave of battle
Is broke 'gainst wall of steel.
And back the shattered masses
In wild confusion reel.

XIII.

Again those charging squadrons,
Rush, furious, on their foe,
The cannon flash, the sabres clash,
With fire the summits glow,
But still those noble warriors,
Repel the fierce attack,
Again Gaul's ranks are broken,
And driven headlong back.

XIV.

But see, now Britain's columns,
Are opening left and right,
And through the breach the cavalry,
Dash onward to the fight ;
Ten thousand steeds are rushing
Like lightning on the foe,
And down, ten thousand riders
Spur on the mass below.

XV.

"Hurra, for merry England !
"Down, down, with all her foes,"
And down their clashing broadsword
came,

In hacking murderous blows,
O'er heaps of slaughtered men,
Those British horsemen ride;
And swift along the foes are borne,
Like froth before the tide.
The shriekings of the wounded
Augment the battle roar,
As on the oozy plain they lie
Deep trampled in their gore.

XVI.

Then at their Chieftain's stern com-
The chivalry of France [mand
Resounding high their charging cry
Rush on with vengeful lance;
"Strike, strike for Gallic honour!
"On, gallant men, and tried,
"For British steel has swept the hill,
"And shed a crimson tide."

XVII.

Swiftly those brave chasseurs
Spur on, like meteor-flash;
And soon the hostile fronts have met
With a fierce and heavy crash,
Now gleam the Gallic sabres,
Now sink the British train;
And file on file, in many a pile,
Lie on the sanguine plain.
On, on, those brave chasseurs,
Are sweeping in their wrath,
While thick the mangled corpses,
Are strewn along their path.
Of those ten thousand horsemen,
Few mount the hill's dark side,
But gashed with wounds from Gallic
steel,
They writhed, and shrieked, and died.

XVIII.

Still on, those Gallic squadrons
Ride down upon the line,
Where England's iron infantry
Their solid strength combine.
Again those Gallic squadrons
Are shattered in the shock;
Like vessel frail before the gale,
Swift speeding on the rock.

XIX.

The bands that rode the proudest,
And fought the best that day,
That like a winged tornado
Burst through their roaring way;

Now lo! the ruddy sword
Along that deadly hill,
While down their blood is streaming
In a smoking purple rill.

XX.

But now the French line wavers,
And desperate grows the fray;
Napoleon bids the brave Old Guard
Draw out in firm array.
Forth ride those veteran heroes,
Grown gray in Europe's wars;
Their brows all seamed with furrows,
Their limbs all seamed with scars.

XXI.

The clarion's ringing voice,
Resounds a thrilling blast;
And down that steep, by shot ploughed
deep
Those Guards are spurring fast;
A stern, hoarse murmur rises,
"On, on, with sword and lance!"
"Long live our noble Emperor,
"Long live our noble France."
Ten thousand steeds are rushing,
Like a foaming mountain flood;
Their sharp hoofs tread on carcasses,
And "splash through pools of blood."
They thunder cross the valley,
They scale the fatal height,
And on those firm compacted lines,
They pour the storm of fight.

XXII.

But still those noble Britons,
The foremost kneeling low,
A bristling hedge of bayonets,
Present to meet the foe:
With shot and shells thick showered
The Gallic ranks are torn:
They sink full fast beneath the blast,
As falls the yellow corn.

XXIII.

That band of hoary warriors,
Who loved the conquering sword,
Whose fiercely-ringing battle-cry
A hundred fields have heard;
No more shall wave the sabre,
No more the lance imbrue;
But low the mangled corpses lie
On gory Waterloo.

XXIV.

And now, thou Gallic chieftain,
Thy lips are blanched with dread;
For lo! thy noble Guards are slain,
Who oft the vict'ry led;
And see, a dark mass moving,
Amid those distant pines;
SEE, now that blazoned Eagle
Betrays the Prussian lines.

XXV.

The notes of drum and trumpet,
That erst were whispered moans,
That faintly echoing through the hills,
Sank down in less'ning tones;
Now swell the war's hoarse clamor,
Like surf along the shore;
And now a hundred massy guns
Join in with jarring roar.
Through all the British infantry,
The word "Advance," is given,
And louder than the battle's din,
A shout goes up to heaven.

XXVI.

And as the raging crater,
Of Etna's burning mount,
Boils up its melted lava,
From some vast fiery fount;
And as the molten billows

Toas wildly to and fro;
Then bursting o'er their former goal,
While lightnings flash and thunders
roll,
And lurid midnight shrouds the pole,
Flame down the vale below:
So charge the rushing Allies,
Down, down, upon the Gaul,
And fast upon the maddened crowd,
Their reddening sabres fall;
Now pressing on the flying host,
They hide the earth with slain,
And grim with sweat, and blood, and
dust,
The brave that won, the brave that
lost,
Whirl o'er the flying plain.

XXVII.

Hail, hail, triumphant Albion,
Be thine the victor's bays:
All hail! let hill and valley
Re-echo with thy praise.
Let England's red-cross banner,
Exult o'er land and sea,
While stained and torn and trampled
The paly Fleur de lis. [lies,

THEODORUS.

THE EARLIEST ENGLISH POETS.

"It seems but an act of justice to pay some honour to the memory of men whose labours have promoted literature and enabled others to eclipse their own reputation."—*LORD HOLLAND.*

"Of poets now into our vulgar tongue
Wel hath the bel of rethorike been runge
By CHAUCER, GOWER and our Laureate,
Who dare presume these poets to impugne?"

Sir DAVID LINDSAY of the Mount,

If there be anything for which the literati of modern time are censurable, it is for the reprehensible neglect with which they have treated the works of their predecessors. Nor is this neglect confined solely to the heavier and more uninteresting branches of literature, it extends even to poetry and romance, which latter are generally "the first to live and the last to die."

We do not exaggerate when we say, that with few exceptions, all the *early* poetry of England has been totally neglected. Some bright particular stars there are, whose unfading lustre has shone and still shines for our pleasure and advantage. But many, alas! who were known and appreciated during the wild and stormy age in which they lived, have faded into oblivion, in this enlightened century, even as the beacon light which comforted the storm-tost mariner in the dark watches of the night, becomes invisible at the approach of day. Such a light was Chaucer. To him was given a perception of the fact "that to write *well*, one must write *naturally*," and had he not availed himself of this, all his ingenuity and humour would not have preserved him from oblivion.

We confess that we cannot look with toleration upon those critics who admit, and at the same time endeavour to account for the Doric roughness of Chaucer's measure by attributing it to the state of English poetry at the time in which he wrote. We doubt in fact whether this roughness exists to the degree which is generally supposed. It cannot be denied that to a modern ear these lines seem perfectly barbarous;—but we should remember that during the age in which he wrote, great liberty was allowed, and that any measure was considered correct if it could by any system of pronunciation be made to harmonise with the words. That Chaucer could write smoothly we are assured, from the specimen which he has given us in his "*Rime of Sir Topas*,"—and that he despised such poetry is evident enough from the manner in which he concludes it.

But this is no place to expatiate upon the poetical abilities of such a "mighty master of the magic pen," as Chaucer, our business is not with the flower-decked islands which lift their heads gloriously glittering with spires and castles, to the summer heavens; but with the sunken palaces which lie deep in the stream of 'Time, and from which as from the drowned castles in the old German tale,

"there comes a ditty

"Wild and wondrous of the olden time."

It is important that every one in reading the works of the Early English Poets, should observe a proper distinc-

tion between the Gothic and classic elements, or to speak more correctly, between the natural and artificial styles which predominate in all their writings. By observing this distinction we can easily explain the numerous turns of thought, apparent errors, &c., with which they abound, but without it, we can never hope either to appreciate their beauty, or understand the peculiar spirit which pervades their writings.

The earliest English poet of whom any record has been preserved, was the Anglo Saxon hermit St. Goderic, who was born (according to Waston and Ritson) in 1160, at Walpole in Norfolk, and lived afterwards at Finchale in Durham, obit. A. D. 1190. He declared that he was favoured with divine revelations, visions, &c., and that while thus illuminated a hymn was taught him by the Virgin, the first verse whereof was as follows:

"Sainte Marie virgine
 Moder Jhesu Cristes Nazareno
 On so, schild help win Godric
 On sang bring hegilich with the in godesriche.

The reader will doubtless agree with us in thinking that better poetry might have been written even without an especial illumination.

CARLOS.

(*To be continued.*)

EDITORS' TABLE.

Again does the Monthly step forward on the stage and make its bow. We trust that it is graceful; and whether it be so or no, we are not conscience-troubled, for the labour which we have bestowed on it, has been quite sufficient to warrant it a hearty reception. We have brought it out thus early on account of the approaching festivities, which we are anxious ourselves to unite in, untroubled and at ease. We are aware that we have little to offer which bears the charm of novelty, and in our editorial labours we have almost wished that time might go back a few centuries to that age when none dared to leave the beaten track, though flowers of the richest hue and sweetest odor might lure them. It was not so strange, then, as we consider it, when the hardy Genoan's sails had disappeared in the west, that the Spanish

matron began to pray and the priest to say masses for the souls of the unburied dead. Nor, when Galileo announced that he had bound the earth, mighty as it is, to the immutability of law, was it so marvellous that the scornful laugh of an untutored age rang harshly in his ears, and the chains of the inquisition clanged heavily on his arms. But though those days have passed away, we do not fear for the reception of our pet, nor do we ask favour; but having thrown it forth we challenge criticism, and leave it to its fate.

But the Editor's table! It would be an easy task to name over a host of the scraps which lie before us, but pray in your heart of hearts that you may be delivered from wading through their contents. Here are rhymes that would haunt you, conclusive arguments on subjects which skeptic never doubted, essays that would drive every particle of romance from the most sentimental disposition, thoughts hideous and strange writhing in the agony of their own ungainliness,—and, by our faith, on the pile is a withered rose-bud. This last was placed there by a Senior friend, who said as he dropped it, "Let it be the epitaph of that mass of *dead intellect*." But it may not be. We would not desecrate the fair flower by such appropriation. When high hopes are crushed, and a proud heart broken, when the flashing eye of manhood is dimmed and the eloquent lip hushed in dreamless silence, when a mother weeps her son and a sister her brother; the Persian law saith, "Let the locust and the holly be strewn upon his grave." When the strong arm is unnerved, when the faded banner hangs droopingly above the rusted sword, and the dust gathers on them since there is none to sweep it away, then let a broken laurel branch cast its leaves upon the tomb of the warrior. But when a soft voice has ceased its laugh of merriness, and the red lip forgotten its warbling, when yonder glorious eye is hidden forever and that firm step has paused in death, when youth is bidden to the bridal of the grave, then let the withered rose-bud be a fitting memorial.

This flower hath to us voiceless teachings, that minister lessons of sad wisdom to the soul. We have dreamed over it. The petals are folded, and the fragrance—the *soul*—has gone. This our body has also an inner inhabitant, whose home is among the silent passions and thoughts which tread in solemn procession on their pilgrim-way to do homage to "the immortal"—and having offered themselves as incense and sacrifice, are gathered to the charnel-house of the mind. But when these chains shall have crumbled and freed us from their thralldom, this unseen monarch of our clay shall be changed, and as imperceptibly as the fragrance of yonder flower went forth, shall it glide into a new being, whose realities we know only as the Book of books has unfolded them. Now the mind is a vast ocean, over which hang clouds of blackness and to whose shore roll waves of foul corruption—then it shall gush forth in purity and holiness as an unsullied fountain. Then shall we

forget that we were ever clay and ashes, bound down to sensuality and bursting forth untrammelled and free, revel in our first existence. Who can say where the home of the spirit shall then be? Would God it were ours to wrap the mantle of immortality around this frail body, and going forth into illimitable space, to seek for that abiding place. But we might seek in vain: Search infinity, far off in the distance where the gleaming of the last star has faded, and nothingness fills immensity; even there would this mighty immaterial wander restlessly in search of knowledge, and strive in that gloom to know the power of Him whom to know aright is the work of eternity. But it is enough to know that we shall be free. Liberty! Liberty! We have heard the cry as if a new creation had broken forth in an anthem of joy.

We were interrupted by a flash of lightning; and the reader is doubtless glad of his delivery from any more dreams. There is the thunder. Low—now louder; now lower again, as if the hounds of hell were baying on the track of a recreant spirit. Ha! that might have been the moan of the elements over an angel's fall. And that—— But we have forgotten our text, and filled the sheet. Our thoughts are before you even as they came unbidden and unarranged, into the mind, as revellers staggering into a banquet room. Permit us to offer our greetings on the approaching anniversary. Gentlemen of Nassau Hall, forget not that our institution is one every stone in whose walls is worth a name in the rolls of our country, every blade of grass in whose grounds was bought with a drop of blood. Pax vobiscum.

NOTICE TO CORRESPONDENTS.

All communications on hand, which do not appear in this number, are rejected.

Stanley's is withdrawn at his request.